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NEW MEXICO'S FIGHT FOR STATEHOOD 1895-1912

By MARION DARGAN

VII: THE PART PLAYED BY THE PRESS OF THE SOUTHWEST

WE HAVE already seen that New Mexico was kept out of the union for years largely because the majority of the American people were convinced that it was an uninhabitable desert and that the people were unfit for self-government. These misconceptions were held tenaciously by the people of the East, and gave way slowly only after a long campaign of advertising. The Bureau of Immigration had been created by the territorial legislature in 1880, and charged with the task of disseminating "accurate information" regarding the resources of New Mexico and the advantages it offered to immigrants. In spite of small appropriations, much had been done under the capable leadership of Max Frost, the masterful editor of the *New Mexican*. Literature regarding the territory had been widely distributed, and the agricultural and mineral products of the territory had been exhibited at expositions, especially at Chicago in 1893 and St. Louis in 1904. Both attractive and unattractive features of the territory had also been advertised by the coming of a number of visitors in the 1890's. These included several groups of newspaper people who merely passed through New Mexico, but many of whom wrote up the territory, favorably or otherwise, on their return home. Other visitors during the decade included those attending an irrigation convention and a Rough Riders' reunion, both held at Las Vegas. If these were not as inclined to rush into print as the editors, the publicity attending their meetings in the territory and the vivid impressions which they carried away with them tended to make the nation more conscious of New Mexico. And, not least among those who helped to put the territory on the map were ardent residents who seldom missed an opportunity to put in a good word for the land they called home.

Having seen what New Mexico and her citizens were doing to advertise their territory, let us now consider what the newspapers outside New Mexico were doing to aid in the work. It is obviously impossible to discuss the national press as a whole. Hence we shall concentrate first on the part played by the newspapers of the Southwest. Even in dealing with this limited area, we shall not attempt to generalize, but shall take up each state separately, "swinging around the circle" from Texas to California and back to Colorado.¹

I

In 1890 Texas had four cities with populations ranging from twenty-seven thousand to thirty-eight thousand.² All four were located in the eastern part of the state, far removed from the trade routes to New Mexico. Furthermore, the Texas War of Independence and the Civil War had prejudiced the people of the Lone Star State against their neighbors on the west. Then too, political leaders in New Mexico were constantly pointing out that the demand of the sheep-raisers for a tariff on wool would make it a republican state, thus furnishing the Texans an additional reason for opposing the aspirations of the territory. The distrust which resulted between the two peoples may be illustrated by the following item which appeared in the *New Mexican* for August 28, 1890:

Senator Reagan [of Texas] opposes the passage of the land court bill, because a Republican president would have the appointment of the judges of the court, and because New Mexico's prosperity might hurt the Democratic state of Texas. Great statesmen those. The Democrats in congress give it to the people of New Mexico at every possible opportunity.

1. The second article in this series dealt with the attitude of the *New Mexican* press. See the *Review*, vol. XIV, pp. 121-142. The aid given by other territories will be omitted here.

2. *Eleventh Census of the United States: 1890* (Government Printing Office, 1895), Part I, pp. 370-373.

Since El Paso straddled the old Chihuahua trade route, and lay only five miles from the New Mexican boundary line, it had much closer relations with that territory than did the cities of east Texas. However, it had a population of only 10,338 and three small newspapers.³ Had they been interested in boosting New Mexico, their support would have been of little value. But even that little was withheld for a time. While not entirely consistent, the El Paso papers were inclined to be critical of the territory, to emphasize the opposition to statehood within New Mexico, and to oppose its admission to the union. Thus, during the long administration of Gov. Miguel A. Otero, the papers of the Gate City were much freer in criticizing his actions than were the great majority of the territorial papers. During the statehood boom at the turn of the century, when the opposition had been practically silenced in New Mexico, the *El Paso Herald* gave considerable space to these "traitors," no matter whether they expressed themselves through petition, interview, or letter.⁴

As early as Jan. 29, 1890, the *Las Vegas Optic* complained that the *El Paso Tribune* had devoted "nearly two columns of its territorial space to prove that New Mexico is not ready for statehood." The only reason given for this opinion was the statement that "A complete canvass of the Territory will hardly show any increase of the English-speaking immigrants in the past five or six years." Eleven years later the territorial press was still complaining of the hostility of the El Paso papers. Thus, in the spring of 1901, the *Albuquerque Citizen*, angered because one of them doubted "that New Mexico has intelligence enough for statehood," remarked that Texas had seen so much lawlessness, that it was "not becoming in a resident of that state to criticize the intelligence of any other community."⁵ Earlier in the same year, the *New Mexican* described the El Paso

3. *Ibid.*, p. 382; Ayers, *American Newspaper Annual*. (Philadelphia, 1896), p. 751.

4. *El Paso Herald*, Jan. 18, 19, 1901. See also the *Review*, XVI, pp. 391-393.

5. *Albuquerque Citizen*, April 30, 1901.

News, a democratic paper founded in 1899, as "a vindictive sheet, published, it seems, for the purpose of harming New Mexico." The Santa Fé paper declared that the Texas paper had assailed it "most bitterly" because it had told "some unpleasant but plain truths about El Paso and the land grabbing ring down there in endeavoring to have passed by congress, the so-called Culberson-Stevens bill providing for the construction of an international dam at El Paso, and prohibiting the taking of water from the Rio Grande River in New Mexico for irrigation purposes, . . ."⁷ A Washington dispatch on the subject appeared in the *New Mexican* under the heading "Enemies of New Mexico."⁸ The Santa Fé paper stated that there was a good deal of Texas capital "and a couple of Democratic papers" behind "the land grabbing ring" which wished to rob the territory of the waters of her chief river and its tributaries.⁹ The *New Mexican* declared that it was not surprising that Senator Culberson and Congressman Stephens were expected to violate the pledge in the democratic platform, and oppose the admission of New Mexico, since representation in congress would enable the new state to defend itself to better advantage.¹⁰ Naturally, the gentlemen referred to did not give this reason for their opposition. The Washington dispatch referred to above stated briefly: "The Texans say the poorer classes (in New Mexico) are illiterate 'greasers', and not in sympathy with our institutions."¹¹ It added that Delegate Rodey accounted "for the opposition in the Texas delegation by charging it to the ill-feeling that has resulted from the international dam project."

6. Santa Fé *New Mexican*, Jan. 13, 1901.

7. *Ibid.*, Jan. 10, 1901. For a discussion of this controversy, see chapter 2 of Otero, Miguel A., *My Nine Years as Governor of the Territory of New Mexico, 1897-1906* (Albuquerque, 1940).

8. *Ibid.*, Dec. 9, 1901.

9. *Ibid.*, Jan. 7, 1901.

10. *Ibid.*, Dec. 9, 1901.

11. *Ibid.* The *New Mexican* for April 25, 1901, said: "The Texas delegation in congress is opposed to New Mexico's desire to become a state. Of course it is. Two Republican senators and one Republican representative in congress from the state of New Mexico would see to it that no land stealing and no water robbing Texas schemes would pass."

President Roosevelt's selection of the slayer of Billy the Kid for an important post in El Paso threatened to add to the animosity. The *Albuquerque Citizen* for Dec. 16, 1901, said:

Texas Congressmen assert that they will fight statehood for New Mexico if [Pat] Garrett is appointed collector of customs. Then it will be in order for the people of New Mexico to boycott El Paso.

As a matter of fact, however, this ill feeling was already giving way to a realization that New Mexico and Texas belonged to the same section, and possessed common interests and problems. Consequently, in May, 1902, when the house passed a bill to admit New Mexico, Arizona and Oklahoma, the *El Paso Herald* greeted the announcement as "good news for the territories, and for lovers of fair play everywhere."¹² The *Herald* declared that the west was "solid for statehood." Among the reasons given for this attitude the most striking was "the increased weight that the west would have in both houses with these additions to the union of states."

The *El Paso News*, which had so recently been denounced by the *New Mexican*, exhibited a striking change of heart in the fall of 1901. It advocated, not only the admission of New Mexico to the union, but everything else the editor thought the people of the territory wanted. In urging the importance of statehood for its neighbor, the *News* said:

New Mexico ought not to be handicapped in congress by reason of having no vote, when the land *lease law* comes up. It is proposed to lease the public range. The shepherds and the cattle owners whose fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers lived in the hills before the coming of the people from the states, would have little chance to enjoy their heritage when penned in by corporation fences, and the men who have secured homesteads with the implicit promise of range for their little herds would be "run out" by a lease system. A lease law would be unjust to the settlers, and, con-

12. *El Paso Herald*, quoted by *Albuquerque Citizen*, May 12, 1902.

gress may not enact such legislation. But if the territory had two senators and a congressman at work, the danger would be less. The growing disposition to regard the new territories, as mere colonies, with less privileges than the people need, may yet seriously affect New Mexico.¹³

Early in the following year the *News* gave its editorial support to a protest which the republicans of Lincoln county had sent to Washington against the proposed change of name of New Mexico to Montezuma, Roosevelt, McKinley, or anything else. The El Paso journal declared that if eastern people did not know "that New Mexico is in the United States," they could learn, and that the sentiment against changing the name was "general throughout New Mexico among the Americans as well as the Mexicans."¹⁴ In June, 1902, the *News* supported the demand for "another judicial district to include Chaves, Lincoln, and Eddy counties." It added:

When the territory becomes a state, she can arrange matters as the people wish, without having to beg a representative from Timbucktoo and a senator from Jingoville to please let 'em have what may be needed.¹⁵

Three months later, the El Paso paper declared that the *White Oaks Eagle* was the only newspaper in New Mexico still opposed to statehood, and suggested that the Lincoln county journal should fall in line with the other papers of the territory.¹⁶ Early in January, 1903, the *News* noted that "New Mexico seems not to be displeased" with the proposed merging of the territories of New Mexico and Arizona into one state. Accordingly the editor, after discussing the objections to this solution from the standpoint of the experience of "Loyal West Texas," concluded by advising the people of the two territories to cultivate a friendship for

13. El Paso *News*, quoted by *Albuquerque Journal Democrat*, Oct. 10, 1901.

14. *Albuquerque Citizen*, Feb. 15, 1902. See also issue for Jan. 1, 1903.

15. El Paso *News*, quoted by *Albuquerque Citizen*, June 10, 1902.

16. El Paso *News*, quoted by *Albuquerque Citizen*, Sept. 29, 1902.

one another, and to regard with pride the proposal to create a state which would rank second in size to the Lone Star State.¹⁷

II

In 1890 California was a prosperous commonwealth with a population of 2,335,523.¹⁸ San Francisco was the largest city in the Southwest, while Los Angeles was the third largest—Denver being second.¹⁹ Serving rapidly growing communities and separated by the desert and hundreds of miles from the Rio Grande valley, their editors did not take a very active interest in the affairs of New Mexico. If they were not as antagonistic toward that territory as some of the El Paso papers were at times, neither were they steady boosters like the Denver papers. Naturally they were more interested in the neighboring territory of Arizona, but not infrequently the two territories were discussed together. Judging from the available data, the newspapers of the Golden State were slow to admit that there was any special bond between the prosperous state and the struggling territory. Both had been acquired at the same time through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and New Mexicans constantly based their right to admission to full citizenship in the American union on a section of that treaty. California editors, however, gave no outward sign of ever having heard of it. Their state had a large Spanish-American population, but the editors were Anglos, who had no word of sympathy for the native population of the territory.

The disinterested, detached manner in which some of the California editors viewed the struggle for statehood for New Mexico may be illustrated by the San Francisco *Chronicle*. In the fall of 1891, when that journal took notice that statehood was "being vigorously agitated" in New Mexico, the question was considered on constitutional grounds. The *Chronicle* predicted that probably the time

17. El Paso News, quoted by Albuquerque Citizen, Jan. 7, 1903.

18. Eleventh Census of the United States, Part I, p. 11.

19. Ibid., p. LXVI.

was "not far distant" when Alaska and possibly Utah would be the only territories left. There was no good reason for keeping the others out very long. The argument of small population was invalid, since a real believer in the federal system saw "no inequality in Rhode Island having as many senators as New York or Delaware as Pennsylvania, . . ." ²⁰

Five years later, when the *Chronicle* advocated the admission of Arizona to the union, the *Optic* reprinted the editorial with the comment: "Substitute New Mexico for Arizona in the following editorial . . . and it is equally as applicable to us as to them." In form, the argument was still along constitutional lines. The *Chronicle* said:

To exclude a properly equipped territory from statehood for fear its senators and one or more representatives may disturb the status of congress is not within the purview of the constitution. ²¹

Reading between the lines, however, it is easy to see that the San Francisco journal recognized that California and Arizona were linked together by a common interest in the silver movement.

The economic ties which linked California and the two southwestern territories were well expressed by the San Diego *Union* in the fall of 1891. The *Union* said:

The future of New Mexico and Arizona is and must always continue to be of much interest and concern to the people of San Diego. Providence has established here the natural gateway through which a vast amount of exportable production of the two territories shall find egress to the markets of the world. In topography, in character of the soil and productions, and, in some respects, in climate, Arizona, New Mexico and California are similar. Over a large part of the area between the Colorado river and the Rio Grande, irrigation must be practiced to obtain the best results, or any results, indeed, from agriculture and horticulture, and already capital is engaged in the construction of

20. San Francisco *Chronicle*, quoted in Silver City *Enterprise*, Oct. 30, 1891.

21. San Francisco *Chronicle*, quoted in Las Vegas *Optic*, Jan. 8, 1896.

dams, reservoirs, distributing systems, etc., to an extent which presages abundant prosperity for the region. Our people are familiar with the desire which territorial residents especially those of Arizona, have expressed for direct rail communication with the bay of San Diego, and with the projects which have from time to time been suggested to effect the building of such a road. It must come. It will come. The commercial necessities of both regions demand it, and the geography of the southwest makes it inevitable; and when it does come the industrial pulse of both countries will beat fuller and with wholesome rapidity.²²

None of the California newspapers seem to have won recognition as loyal friends of the territories. If it was not very hearty in its support, however, the Los Angeles *Express* did claim consistency. In June, 1901, it declared that, if New Mexico and Arizona would adopt "proper constitutions," and were "willing to pay increased expenses of state government," there was "no good reason why they should not be admitted to full fellowship in the union." The editor added:

This position has been steadily maintained by the *Express*, and nothing has happened to cause any change in this opinion.

The Los Angeles *Times* was less consistent and excited the suspicions of the territorial press. In 1892 and in 1895 the *Times* predicted that Arizona and New Mexico would "soon be full stars in the union banner."²³ that their knocking at the doors of congress would not be in vain.²⁴ The territorial papers that reported these predictions failed to say whether or not the Los Angeles paper was happy at the prospect. A special mining number of the *Times* which appeared late in October, 1901, won the praise of the Lordsburg *Western Liberal*. It declared that this was "the best presentation" of the mining industry of the territory "ever

22. San Diego *Union*, Oct. 24, 1891.

23. Los Angeles *Times*, quoted in *Optic*, June 20, 1892.

24. Los Angeles *Times*, quoted in *Albuquerque Citizen*, April 2, 1895.

put in print."²⁵ The editor added that it was "bound to do a great deal of good," since it would "be distributed all through the East, where people are looking for investments." The *Times*, however, admitted that an occasional territorial paper failed to appreciate the efforts of "this stalwart champion of the Great Southwest."²⁶ A few days later both the *New Mexican* and the *Citizen* declared that the *Times* was opposing statehood for Arizona and New Mexico because it feared that the two states would become rivals of California. The *New Mexican* said:

This spirit should be resented by the people of the two territories and although the circulation of the Los Angeles Times is limited, very limited in New Mexico and Arizona, even that limited circulation should be cut off so as to show the management of the Times that the people of New Mexico and of Arizona will resent any attack upon their commonwealths.²⁷

The *Citizen* commented:

The Times should be a good friend of the two territories. If they grow and prosper, they will help build up the coast cities.²⁸

The Los Angeles paper denied that it was opposed to the admission of the territories, and accused the *New Mexican* of a malicious and absurd falsehood. It added that the attempt of the Santa Fé paper "to misrepresent the Times on this question is a lurid example of cowboy, picker-pin and riata 'gernalism.'"²⁹

Evidently the *Times* did not say in so many words that it was opposed to the admission of Arizona and New Mexico, but the territorial editors sensed the hostility of this conservative journal. The unpardonable sin committed by the latter was to refer to the opposition within the territories.

25. Lordsburg *Western Liberal*, quoted in Los Angeles *Times*, Oct. 31, 1901.

26. Los Angeles *Times*, Oct. 31, 1901.

27. *New Mexican*, Nov. 6, 1901.

28. Albuquerque *Citizen*, Nov. 7, 1901.

29. Los Angeles *Times*, Nov. 12, 1901.

After summarizing a memorial which citizens of New Mexico had sent to congress, asking for statehood, the Los Angeles paper added:

In the territory, however, as in Arizona, there is a considerable element of the population opposed to statehood.³⁰

This was true, as we have already seen, but statehood workers chose to ignore it.

The lack of sympathy with which the *Times* viewed the statehood agitation in both territories was revealed conclusively by an editorial which appeared on Nov. 15, 1901. The article was entitled "Unreasoning Shouters for Statehood." While it dealt with the movement in Arizona, it is worth careful consideration here. The editorial said:

... a renewed campaign for Statehood is under way in the Territory, . . . and certain Arizona editors are riding around upon wild broncos, hurling violent "langwidge" and other things at The Times, because this journal ventured to give the people of Arizona a suggestion as to the best manner in which the ambition entertained by some of them might be realized.

The Los Angeles paper, "not disconcerted by the attacks of the Arizona rough riders," addressed an enquiry to

a prominent, independent and well informed long resident of the Territory. This enquiry was made because the Times does not repose entire confidence in the shouting and wrangling journalists of Arizona, nor in the equally noisy politicians of both parties, nor yet in a Governor whose motives are not difficult to divine.

A reply, dated, Tucson, Arizona, Nov. 13, 1901, was printed in full.³¹ This stated that, while the whole territory was for statehood according to the democratic newspapers and politicians, there were "many doubters in Arizona, who look

30. *Ibid.*, Nov. 6, 1901.

31. *Ibid.*, Nov. 15, 1901.

at the question in a business way." These saw that the admission of the territory "would assure the election of democrats to offices now held under presidential appointment"; and that there would be added expense, since "the people would be compelled to pay salaries now paid by the United States government." Furthermore, they feared "that Arizona would become a rotten borough like Nevada, especially since the leading candidates for the senate in the event of statehood were corporation men. The writer admitted that many of the Arizona republicans who favored statehood were sincere. He said:

They have the idea that life is better worth living in a State, and are willing to pay for it. They believe that capital and population will rush into the new State, and that the railroads and mines will be compelled to pay nearer their proper proportion of taxes. No doubt Murphy believes all he says on the subject. He has hammered away on it for years. Of course, he, too, would like a senatorial toga; that is a laudable ambition.

No wonder the *New Mexican* and the *Citizen* regarded the *Times* with distrust, even though the editorial did not mention New Mexico, and no one could say that it was equally applicable to that territory. The author of the letter admitted that Arizona was "Democratic beyond a doubt," while Catron and Rodey claimed that New Mexico would be a republican state. Consequently, the *Times* had less reason to fear that the admission of New Mexico would mean the election of democrats to office. Nor was there so much reason to fear that the politics of New Mexico would be controlled by corporations. From the standpoint of statehood workers in New Mexico, however, the article was full of dynamite. If it was not reprinted in any of the papers of that territory, it is not surprising.

III

Colorado had been a state for only fourteen years in 1890. It had a population of 412,198. Nearly one fourth

of this number lived in Denver.³² As might be expected, the newspapers of the young commonwealth and its rising city were to take a strong interest in the destiny of New Mexico. Yet a number of them declared themselves opposed to the admission of that territory in 1889 and 1890. These included the *Denver Republican*, the *Pueblo Chieftain*, the (Denver) *Colorado Journal*, the *Leadville Dispatch* and the *Denver Field and Farm*. Two of the editorials were written by men who had formerly been connected with newspapers in New Mexico.³³ The last named paper declared that it was receiving many letters, all of which indicated that "the solid men of the territory" agreed that "the time has not yet come." They argued that New Mexico was prospering and making enormous strides in settlement, and a change to a new system was likely to retard development. While "the Mexicans" were "good, law-abiding citizens," the progress of the territory was due to the American population. The creation of a state out of New Mexico would "practically mean the creation of a foreign country within the borders of the United States, and the disfranchisement" of the American population. Hence it would be better to wait a few years until the American population had acquired the ascendancy.³⁴ The immediate purpose of the editorial was to prevent the legislature of Colorado from passing a resolution urging the admission of New Mexico to the union. The *Colorado Journal* took a more extreme position in the spring of 1890. It exclaimed:

New Mexico a state! It is not fit to become a state. Fifty per cent of the inhabitants of New Mexico are like the Lee White band, and twenty-five per cent are even worse.³⁵

Even as late as the summer of 1901, the *New Mexican* complained:

32. *Ibid.*, p. LXVII.

33. Lute Wilcox, "for quite a while connected with the press of this Territory" and Lou Hartigan, "late of the Gallup Gleaner." *Optic*, Feb. 14, 1889; Jan. 20, 1890.

34. *Denver Field and Farm*, quoted in *Optic*, Feb. 14, 1889.

35. *San Marcial Reporter*, April 5, 1890.

The *Pueblo Chieftain* says that when Statehood for New Mexico is mentioned, somebody objects to the presence of so many Mexicans of the bad man class.³⁶

The following February, the *Denver News* contained a sensational write-up of Cora Chiquita, "the Pretty Cow Girl of Santa Rosa." She was described as "a quarter blood Cherokee Indian," twenty-three years of age, who wore male attire, drank heavily, was a dead shot and who was in the habit of riding her horse into saloons and shooting up the town.³⁷

Both the *Las Vegas Record* and the *Albuquerque Citizen* agreed that such publicity was injuring New Mexico.³⁸ The territorial press was inclined to take their brother editors in Colorado to task, not only for "atrocious falsehoods about the territory," but also for their failure to champion statehood for their neighbor. Thus the *Optic* for Jan. 25, 1890, complained that "The *Denver Republican* warmly urges the admission of Arizona into the union, but is unable to find a good word to say for New Mexico as an eligible candidate for the sisterhood." "It is hard on us," the editor added, "but we will endeavor to pull through without the tow line of the *Republican*." About the same time, the *Republican* urged that congress establish a land court to end the uncertainties regarding Spanish and Mexican land grants which were retarding the settlement and development of New Mexico.³⁹ The *Denver* paper predicted that the territory would have a "great boom if this obstacle were removed."⁴⁰ In quoting this editorial, the *New Mexican* said: "The *Denver Republican* is helping our territory in many ways and often, and the people of New Mexico should bear this in mind." Evidently the Colorado paper could not stand out against the protests of the *Optic* and the words of ap-

36. *New Mexican*, August 7, 1901.

37. *Denver News*, Feb. 21, 1902.

38. *Albuquerque Citizen*, Feb. 26, 1902.

39. *Denver Republican*, Dec. 5, 1889.

40. *Ibid.*, quoted by *New Mexican*, April 19, 1890.

preciation of the *New Mexican*, since an editorial soon appeared in the *Republican* which favored the admission of New Mexico.⁴¹ It is interesting to note the way in which the *New Mexican* used the trade relations between Colorado and the territory to win the Colorado papers over to the support of statehood. Thus the *New Mexican* for Dec. 10, 1890, first quoted the *Pueblo Chieftain*, then presented its argument. The editorial read as follows:

“Owing to her central location and the push and enterprise of her merchants Pueblo enjoys a large wholesale trade in many kinds of goods in southern Colorado, Utah and New Mexico. This business is being vigorously pushed and every month it increases in volume,” says the *Pueblo Chieftain*. And, pray, while this is so, possibly, has ever Pueblo, its press or its people had a friendly word for New Mexico? On the contrary, has it not always spoken disdainfully of this territory and belittled in the smallest way possible every New Mexican interest? When the *Chieftain* shall have attempted honestly to answer these interrogatories, and shall have shown its good will toward New Mexico that common justice demands, possibly it itself will be able to secure some of the business down here that now goes to Denver and Kansas City. As it is, it simply amounts to a narrow-gauge paper attempting to speak for a town that would be broad-gauged in its treatment of neighboring localities—if it had half a chance.⁴²

By the 1890's, the newspapers of Colorado and especially those of Denver, were doing much to give New Mexico the right kind of publicity and to aid her in the long struggle for statehood. The *Denver Republican* and the

42. The *Trinidad Advertiser* had already seen the wisdom of boosting its neighbor to the south. It declared in the spring of 1890 that, while it was not probable that the Republican administration would upset the safe majority which it had secured by the admission of the Dakotas, Washington and Montana, New Mexico was “ten times more deserving to be a state than Idaho,” which would not be able to maintain statehood. The *Advertiser* predicted that Southern New Mexico, next to California, would be “the greatest fruit growing country in the United States.” And that in time “the territory would rival Texas as a sheep and cattle growing country.” *Trinidad Advertiser*, quoted by *New Mexican*, May 8, 1890.

Rocky Mountain News, published in the same city, were among the staunchest champions of the cause. The establishment of better railroad connections with Albuquerque, the growth of trade between the two centers, and their increased circulation in New Mexico prompted both papers to show great interest in the economic development of their southern neighbor. The realization that the growth of Denver was tied up with that of the whole Rocky Mountain region, and the fact that citizens of Colorado were using their mining experience and capital to good advantage in numerous projects in New Mexico led to detailed accounts of such developments in that territory. The people of the state were urged to attend the fairs held in Albuquerque in order that their knowledge of the products of New Mexico might enable them to get in on the ground floor in its development. Convinced that the progress which Colorado had made in twenty-five years of statehood was due largely to its admission to the union and that statehood would promote the material progress of New Mexico likewise, the Denver press seldom lost an opportunity to say a good word for the territory. Furthermore, Colorado editors saw that the admission of New Mexico would strengthen their section in the councils of the nation. Thus in the spring of 1890 the *Denver Field and Farm* said:

As a neighbor we would be glad to see that territory [New Mexico] admitted to the union. It would be a benefit to it and its industries. It would benefit Colorado, since we could rely on its senators to stand with us in all matters where the east dominates over the west.⁴³

Some of the older citizens of the state had a sentimental reason for wishing to see New Mexico a state. The appointment of Stephen B. Elkins as secretary of war "recalled to many in Colorado and New Mexico"—so the *Denver Sun*

43. *Denver Field and Farm*, quoted in *New Mexican*, March 28, 1890. Early in December, 1901, the *Denver Republican* said: "Justice and the interests of the trans-Missouri region alike demand that these three territories (New Mexico, Arizona, and Oklahoma) be admitted." (*Denver Republican*, quoted by *New Mexican*, Dec. 9, 1901.)

declared in December, 1891—"an interesting chapter of curious and almost forgotten political history." The *Sun* stated that the delegate from Colorado, Jerome B. Chaffee, had worked in vain for the admission of that territory. Then, during the winter of 1874-75, Elkins, the delegate from New Mexico, had presented the claims of his territory in a speech which had made a very favorable impression in the house, and had "also attracted the attention of the entire country. It is, perhaps, not too much to say," the *Sun* ventured, "that he made a national reputation by that one speech." The Denver banker had then promptly offered an amendment to include Colorado in the bill and the two delegates had "commenced a determined fight for their territories." Colorado had been admitted, while New Mexico remained a territory. The *Sun* concluded:

If Colorado had not been admitted at that time, she would likely have been compelled to have stayed out in the cold, dependent territorial condition until the Dakotas, Washington, Montana, Wyoming and Idaho were finally let in. That would have had much of injurious effect upon the material growth of the commonwealth and would have seriously affected a good many political fortunes. Therefore, this state is not free from obligation to the new secretary of war.⁴⁴

One influential citizen of the "Centennial State" who liked to recall the old days when Elkins had nearly gotten New Mexico into the union was Thomas MacDonald Patterson, who served as the last delegate of the Territory of Colorado in congress.⁴⁵ During a good part of the last two decades of New Mexico's struggle for statehood, he was a dominant figure in the newspaper field in his state. He had full control of the *Rocky Mountain News* from 1892 until 1913, and he also bought the *Denver Times*. A man of strong convictions, he was always ready to fight for the causes in

44. *Denver Sun*, quoted by *New Mexican*, Dec. 23, 1891.

45. The enabling act had been passed on March 3, 1875—the last day of the life of the Forty-third Congress. Patterson served as delegate from March 3, 1875, to Aug. 1, 1876, when the territory became a state.

which he was interested. As a member of the United States senate from 1901 to 1907, he earnestly championed the cause of New Mexico. As he was a man of great honesty and sincerity, it is not surprising to find that the papers he controlled gave strong support to the statehood crusade.

Even at the risk of some repetition, it may be worthwhile to indicate briefly the way in which the Colorado papers dealt with the question of statehood for New Mexico and her sister territories. Usually they showed a real understanding of the statehood movement and of the opposition, but there were exceptions. Thus the *Denver Republican* in January, 1892, expressed surprise that anyone in New Mexico should oppose statehood,⁴⁶ and in October, 1901, it declared that there was no reason why any man living in New York or Massachusetts should object to the admission of New Mexico or Arizona.⁴⁷ The Colorado papers paid slight attention to opposition within the territories, but they gave frequent, if somewhat contradictory opinions as to the opposition in the nation. Thus the *Denver Times* of Jan. 25, 1894, concluded: "The objection to the admission of New Mexico has been that her population is essentially foreign, Mexican in language, ideas and affiliation." This argument evoked a variety of answers in the Colorado press. The *Denver Republican* for Jan. 19, 1889, declared that Congressman Reed of Maine was mistaken in assuming that the population of the United States should necessarily be homogeneous. The Colorado paper admitted that, if New Mexico became a state, she would differ very much from Maine or Massachusetts in the characteristics of her people and in her laws, especially since the old law of Spain was the foundation of the probate law of the territory. The *Republican* cited the fact that the laws of Louisiana were not based on the English common law, but on the Code Napoleon. It concluded that such local differences would not affect the working of our federal system. Following the same line of argument, the same

46. *Denver Republican*, quoted in *Optic*, Jan. 20, 1892.

47. *Denver Republican*, quoted in *New Mexican*, Oct. 4, 1901.

paper of Sept. 16 declared that the ability to speak English was not a prerequisite for American citizenship.

In the fall of 1892, the *Denver Sun* declared that the "principle objection heretofore" to the admission of New Mexico had been that the population was chiefly Mexican peons, but that this argument was no longer valid, since there had been "a wonderful change for the better in the social conditions of the Territory during the last ten years," due to a large influx of Americans and an improvement in the Mexicans who had just attained manhood. Referring to the rapid development of the material interests of the territory, the *Sun* predicted that the Denver and El Paso railroad would be constructed "within a very short time *** through an entirely undeveloped section of the territory, . . ." The *Sun* added the rather doubtful "fact" that "the entire population is in favor of statehood . . ." ⁴⁸

Shortly before this, the *Denver News* had published an editorial somewhat along the same line. This emphasized the growth of the American population, the establishment of a public school system, and the progressive sentiment developing among the native people. It declared that this progress was due to the territory itself, not to the government of the United States. It further charged that, if the territory was at all backward in American ways and ideas, "the federal government is wholly to blame. Coming into the

United States as New Mexico did, its native Spanish-speaking people ought to have been the object of special consideration on the part of the nation, and ought to have been supplied with a school system forty years ago, at government expense. To have taken no pains to Americanize these people and then to refuse the Territory admission as a state because it has not progressed as rapidly as other western Territories have, is the height of national injustice. ⁴⁹

After the war with Spain, this line of argument was strengthened by the concern of the federal government for

48. *Denver Sun*, quoted in *Optic*, Nov. 30, 1892.

49. *Denver News*, quoted in the *Optic*, July 1, 1892.

for its new island possessions. Thus the *Denver News* for May 23, 1902, declared that

while teachers were being sent by the shipload to Porto Rico and the Philippines, New Mexico, although for more than 50 years a territory of the United States, had never received any aid in the way of public education. . . . When this territory passed under the dominion of the United States it was as thoroughly foreign in customs and language as Porto Rico is today. Yet the United States has taken no special pains to educate the people of that Territory, and what they have accomplished is due to their own splendid effort.⁵⁰

Even when emphasizing the "remarkable advancement in education" in the territory, the Colorado press went on to distinguish between the "alleged reason" and "the true reason" for keeping New Mexico out of the union. The latter was to be found, it declared, not in "the backwardness of the territory," but in certain political and sectional considerations. There was fear that New Mexico would prove a democratic state, and that its admission and that of other territories would add to the strength of the west in the senate.⁵¹ Thus in the spring of 1890 the *Trinidad Advertiser* said:

New Mexico is clamoring for statehood, but it hardly seems probable that the Republican administration will hurl a boomerang and upset its safe majority which it secured by the admission of the Dakotas, Washington and Montana.⁵²

Perhaps some of the Colorado papers were sometimes a little too bold in emphasizing the effect which the admission of the territories would have on the relative strength of the sections in congress. Thus in December, 1893, the *Denver News* said:

50. The *New Mexican* for May 24, 1902, reprinted an extract from an editorial in the *Rocky Mountain News* which gives the same line of argument.

51. *Rocky Mountain News*, quoted in *New Mexican*, May 24, 1902.

52. *Trinidad Advertiser*, quoted in *New Mexican*, May 8, 1890.

When New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Oklahoma have been admitted to statehood the states west of the Mississippi will lack only six votes of a majority in the United States senate. The west and south will then be in a position to dictate to the eastern money power. That is what is chafing and worrying the effete east.⁵³

The Colorado press continually elaborated upon the statehood argument.⁵⁴ The growing population, the wealth of resources, the advancement in education, and the injustice done to the people through the denial of home-rule were all emphasized. While the argument was usually quite factual and matter-of-fact, at times it bordered on eloquence. Thus the following "very eloquent appeal" from the *Denver Post* was reprinted in the *New Mexican* for Jan. 27, 1897:

Fifty years have elapsed since New Mexico became a part of our common country. Its progress for the first half of the period was slow. It was treated as a conquered province. It had first to be Americanized before progress could begin. The wreck of the civilization of the fifteenth century had to be cleared away before the spirit of the nineteenth century could possess the land. The process required time, but the problem has worked itself out and the new towns and cities, the new railroads, the new enterprizes and the new schoolhouses are ample evidence of the spirit that now animates the people of New Mexico. Today it stretches forth its hand to the nation and asks for immigration, for capital, for men and women able to invest and work and to transform its material resources into active producers of wealth and prosperity. It appeals for statehood as an assurance of the rights which belong to all citizens of the republic. These appeals are just and should be granted by the

53. *Denver News*, quoted in *New Mexican*, December 27, 1893. See also the *Denver Republican*, November 16, 1889.

54. Commenting on the statehood convention held in Albuquerque, the *Denver News* for Oct. 26, 1901, said: "The rightfulness of the claims of New Mexico for admission as a state has been so often presented in these columns that it is necessary only to approve and applaud the work of the convention . . . , and again urge that congress pay heed to the request of her people."

nation to a brave, enterprising, patriotic and intelligent people who opened a wilderness to civilization and pointed out the pathway to material greatness.

The Colorado editors kept a watchful eye on what their brethren further east had to say about New Mexico, and did not hesitate to set them straight. Thus in the spring of 1889, when it was rumored that the territory would be divided, the *Denver Republican* declared that there was not "the slightest probability of this taking place."⁵⁵ The same editorial also denied the statement of a Chicago paper "that the wealthy Mexicans dominate the country like feudal lords." The *Republican* added:

They have a great deal of influence, but so have certain Americans. Probably at one time a few Mexican families controlled the politics and, to a large extent, the business of the territory, but this is not so now. It is becoming less and less so every year.

If a westerner contributed something to an eastern journal, the *Republican* was likely to endorse what he said. Thus, Gov. N. O. Murphy of Arizona wrote in the *New York Independent* for Jan. 23, 1902, that "occasionally misinformed citizens of the territories" opposed statehood on grounds of economy, whereas in reality it was to be expected that all kinds of property would increase in value with statehood. The *Republican* declared editorially that unquestionably the governor "echoes the sentiments of a majority of the citizens of the territories, . . ." although prior to this "the chief stumbling block in the way of the territories" had been "the indifference of their own residents to the question of statehood."⁵⁶ Convinced that the *Independent* had gotten a false impression of the west from *In the Country God Forgot: A Story of Today* by Francis Asa Charles, the *Republican* promptly expressed its disapproval in an editorial

55. *Denver Republican*, April 11, 1889.

56. *Denver Republican*, Jan. 26, 1902.

headed "Misunderstanding the Southwest." The Denver paper said that the novel was "supposed to depict conditions in Arizona and New Mexico," but that "the *Independent* would do well to make investigations at first hand."⁵⁷

Occasionally territorial editors protested against "the information" regarding the territory spread by the Colorado papers. Thus, during the first half of the year 1892, the *Optic* felt it necessary to defend the native people and the federal office-holders of the territory from unjust criticisms which appeared in the editorial columns of the Denver *News*. In the first case, that journal not only stated that New Mexico was the most illiterate region in the United States in 1880, but that since then she had showed the greatest hostility toward the public school.⁵⁸ Admitting that "we may be very illiterate, down here," the *Optic* protested that the Kistler school bill of 1889 "was not defeated by the native influence, as the *News* clearly intimates," but was due to "certain Americans, having large landed interests, who objected to school districts having the right to vote a special school tax on lands."⁵⁹ The *Optic* concluded:

It is an altogether mistaken idea that the native people of New Mexico are opposed to public schools, and the sooner our friends abroad disabuse themselves of the thought, the better it will be.

Less than two months later, the *News* declared that the average territorial office-holder "does not know what a principle is, and his interest in the territory consists only in retaining the position he may be filling."⁶⁰ Declaring that this was unjust to officeholders in New Mexico, the *Optic* said:

Evidently the *News* has its ideas of the Territorial appointee from the days and men when the Territories were the dumping ground for broken-

57. *Ibid.*, July 30, 1902. On the other hand, the *Republican* recommended a series of articles on "The Great Southwest" written by Ray Stannard Baker. These appeared in the *Century* from May to August, 1902.

58. Denver *News*, quoted by *Optic*, Feb. 29, 1892.

59. *Optic*, Feb. 29, 1892.

60. Denver *News*, quoted by *Optic*, April 18, 1892.

down political hacks, sent out from all parts of the union. . . .

Nearly all those filling federal offices here were citizens of the Territory at the time of their appointment and are as truly, deeply and widely interested in New Mexico, as it is possible for any citizen of Colorado to be interested in that state. In fact, it would be difficult for friend or foe, for democrat or republican, for mug-wump or granger, to imagine how any official could more untireingly [*sic*] and sagaciously labor for the good of the Territory than the present governor has done and is still doing.⁶¹

During the last two decades of New Mexico's struggle for statehood, the Colorado papers were always ready to advise as to the fate of their southern neighbor. They did not hesitate either to censure what had been done, or to counsel as to what should be done. Their words of admonition and advice were sometimes directed toward the New Mexicans themselves, sometimes toward the senate or others in authority in national affairs. During the critical year of 1889 three Denver papers strongly suggested that the opportunity of coming into the union along with the northwestern territories was being jeopardized or lost through the actions of the New Mexicans. Thus the *Denver Republican* for March 4 declared that the adjournment of the territorial legislature without enacting the public school law was "a very serious blunder." The *Republican* pointed out that the porportion of illiteracy in the territory was high, and that public school money was divided among certain sectarian schools. Having expressed a doubt as to whether there were "more than six public schools in the Territory," the editorial predicted that Americans would hesitate to make their homes in the territory as long as such conditions prevailed. Each county, the *Republican* concluded, should see to the organization of genuine public schools. Practically the same advice was given by the *Denver News* on March 10. Meanwhile the *Denver Times* had spoken even more bluntly.

61. *Optic*, April 18, 1892.

The *Times* said it was charged that the territorial legislature which had just adjourned "has made more blunders and passed more pernicious laws and fewer good ones than any of its predecessors." If this indictment was true, the *Times* opined, "the legislature has certainly not improved the prospects of the Territory for admission as a state."⁶² The Denver papers frequently warned the New Mexicans against the folly of "divided counsels," declaring that it would defeat statehood.⁶³

The Colorado press, however, did not direct all its censure and advice at the citizens of New Mexico. During the 1890's the United States senate was repeatedly criticized by both Republican and Democratic papers in Colorado because it had postponed statehood for the territory. Thus in July, 1892, the Denver *Times* declared that that body had been guilty of "a rare piece of political cowardice" because it had postponed consideration of a statehood bill until after the elections.⁶⁴ Early in 1895 the Denver *Republican* took the senate to task, declaring that another postponement of the enabling act had "delayed prosperity."⁶⁵ Council was also freely given to both individuals and organizations that had to make any decision regarding the admission of New Mexico to the union. Thus some months before the meeting of the Republican national convention of 1896, the Denver *Republican* said, editorially: "The Republican party will not gain strength in these Rocky Mountain states by excluding New Mexico and Arizona from their just claims to statehood."⁶⁶ The attitude of the Colorado press was set forth a little more fully, however, by the Denver *Republican* for July 12, 1902, in its advice to the man who was to hold the destinies of New Mexico in his hand for a decade. The *Republican* said:

62. Denver *Times*, quoted by *Optic*, March 6, 1889.

63. See, for example, Denver *Republican*, Oct. 30, 1889; and Denver *News*, quoted by *Optic*, July 1, 1892.

64. Denver *Times*, quoted in *Optic*, July 21, 1892. See also *Optic*, Feb. 4, 1895.

65. *Optic*, Feb. 4, 1895.

66. Denver *Republican*, quoted by Albuquerque *Morning Democrat*, Jan. 22, 1896.

While Senator Beveridge, chairman of the senate committee on territories, is in Colorado, he should take note of the fact that the sentiment of the Republican party in this state is strongly in favor of the admission of Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona.

We who live here ought to know better than most Republicans east of the Mississippi what the sentiment of the Far West is on the subject, and also what the qualifications for statehood of the three Territories are.

As we shall see, the Indiana senator turned a deaf ear to these words of advice. There can be no doubt, however, that the Colorado press rendered effective aid, not only in boosting the territory but also in the statehood fight. The Denver papers, especially with their wider circulation, served as a clearing house for information regarding New Mexico. Their regular issues frequently mentioned mining prospects in the territory, and they also issued special New Year's Day editions which gave a resumé of the progress made in the Rocky Mountain region during the past year. It is true that New Mexico editors sometimes complained of the inadequate space given their territory,⁶⁷ but such grumbling should not lead the student to ignore the advertising value of these special issues to New Mexico. Furthermore, as we have already seen, the Colorado papers gave much space to defending the native people from attack and to elaborating on the argument for statehood. In addition, they frequently made practical suggestions as to how the state and its citizens might aid in the statehood crusade. Thus the *New Mexican* for Jan. 30, 1889, said:

The Denver *Times* and the *Republican* of the same city are advocating that the Colorado legislature shall memorialize congress to admit New Mexico as a state. The ground of the proposed action . . . is that the Centennial state was admitted largely through the efforts of S. B. Elkins, when that gentleman was delegate from New Mexico.

67. *New Mexican*, Jan. 3, 1903.

Twelve years later, during the momentous statehood fight of 1902, the *Denver Republican* published the names of the members of the senate committee on territories at least twice, and urged its readers to write these gentlemen in behalf of New Mexico, Arizona and Oklahoma.⁶⁸ Readers were also urged to write any other members of the senate with whom they were acquainted.

While the editors of New Mexico complained from time to time of the hostility or indifference of this or that paper in Texas, California or Colorado, there can be no doubt that the Southwestern press did much to advertise the territory and to aid her in her struggle for statehood. The Colorado papers gave the strongest support, and especially those of Denver. Political leaders of New Mexico were most lavish in their praise of the *Republican*. While on a visit to Colorado's capital city in the fall of 1897, Gov. Miguel A. Otero told a reporter for that paper:

I am particularly grateful to the *Republican* for the help that it is constantly giving to the interests of New Mexico. Your paper has always been a good friend to the Territory, and is doing all that it can to further our development. We have no complaint to make of Colorado people. Their interests are in many respects identical with ours, and they have always been generous in extending their help, as they have some idea of the great wealth which we have that only needs capital for its development. It is the Eastern people who do not understand the extent and variety of our resources and persistently misunderstand the character of our Mexican population, who are as loyal, as industrious and progressive as the people of any state if they have the time and opportunity for development.⁶⁹

While the little governor made no reference to aid given in the statehood struggle, this was undoubtedly due to the fact that he had been in office for only a few months and had not

68. *Denver Republican*, May 13, 1902; June 1, 1902.

69. *Denver Republican*, Oct. 6, 1897.

thoroughly identified himself with that movement at that time. When, however, Delegate Bernard Rodey wrote the *Republican* in June, 1902, he thanked the Denver paper particularly for services rendered along that line.⁷⁰ Commenting on the letter the following day, the editor said:

The service thus acknowledged was no departure on the part of the *Republican* from the course pursued for years. We have always recognized the claims of New Mexico upon the favor and good will of the public, and particularly of the National Congress.⁷¹

The next article in this series will consider the attitude of the eastern papers, particularly as illustrated by the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* and the *Washington Post*. At the same time, we shall identify some of the correspondents in the territory and in the national capital who furnished publicity for New Mexico to the press of the nation.

70. *Ibid.*, June 12, 1902.

71. *Ibid.*, June 13, 1902.